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MONTANA LABOR MARKET

Monthly Review of
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE
Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

Albert F. Root, Commissioner | Chadwick H. Smith, Chairman | Paul R. McClure, Commissioner

Mitchell Building — P. O. Box 1728 — Helena, Montana

FL-149 | JULY, 1955

Wage Earners in Montana Approach Year-Ago Level

Employment in Montana industrial and commercial enterprises rose by 5,500 in June over the May figures, and was only 700 below the record June level established in 1954, according to estimates compiled by the commission in cooperation with the federal bureau of labor statistics. The wage-earner figure for June is given as 159,600, that of a year ago was 160,300, and May had 154,100 on payrolls.

Reflects Seasonal Influences

The gain over May totals was seasonal in nature. Manufacturing expanded by 1,300, of which 900 was registered in logging and lumbering and 400 in food processing establishments. Contract construction used 700 more workers in June than in May, and governmental employment went up 1,500, of which 1,100 was in federal and 400 in state and local circles, mostly in parks, forests, and on highways. Retail trade shows a gain of 600 over May, and wholesale trade used 200 more than in May. Transportation and utilities show a plus figure of 300, finance and real estate of 200, and service industries were using 800 more employees in June than in May.

Shortage of Miners Continues

Metal mining employment reduced 300 from May to June, partly offset by 100 increase in quarrying and 100 in petroleum production. The mining deficit is due to scarcity of qualified applicants for underground work, and continues in the face of intensive recruitment efforts. The principal employers of metal miners lengthened their work week to six days from the prevailing fixe day schedule in June, a step which may draw more applicants into the field.

Steady Recovery Since September

The trend of the June estimates on employment is toward the high levels established a year ago, the narrow difference of 700 being the nearest approach since August last. Employment levels at that time took a downturn with idleness in metal mining and smelting industries due to a wage dispute. September fell 8,000 below its year ago figure. Settlement of the difference restored part of the loss, with each succeeding month drawing closer to the level of the preceding year.

Transportation and Construction Lag

Comparison of the June, 1955, figures with those of June, 1954, reveal that slight gains were made in employment in manufacturing, wholesale trade, finance and insurance, and in government. These were more than offset by reductions of 700 in transportation and utilities, 700 in construction, 500 in metal mining, 200 in retail trade, and 300 in service industries, leaving a net decrease of 700 from a year ago.

STATE LABOR SUPPLY REPLENISHED IN JUNE BY WORKERS RELEASED FROM SCHOOL DUTIES

Labor supply in Montana at the end of June remained virtually equal to that a month earlier, after meeting demands from various seasonal industries and after receiving thousands of new applicants upon closing of school terms, the work-applicant count for the month indicates. As of June 25 there were 5,274 seeking jobs at offices of the employment service, a year ago the number was 5,403, and in May there were 5,565 such applicants.

Labor Market Trend Follows Year Ago Pattern

Drain on the labor supply during June was a little less than a year ago, but about on a par with June of 1953, 52, and 51. The usual influx of students and teachers released from classroom duties nearly kept pace with new hiring. The general trend of the labor market during the first six months of the year closely parallels that of the first six months in 1954. In both years the absence of large, mass-employing projects in construction left a larger residue of unemployed applicants than were available in any of the three preceding seasons, when Hungry Horse, Canyon Ferry, and other large employers were active.

Work-Applicant Count in Review

	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950
January	12,887	12,270	10,616	10,370	11,685	18,048
March	11,979	11,075	9,323	9,392	10,844	16,085
May	5,565	6,191	4,324	3,276	4,312	6,755
June	5,274	5,403	3,910	2,957	4,240	5,809
July	*4,100	4,283	3,249	2,191	3,260	3,920
September		3,782	2,288	1,955	2,572	3,179
November		5,617	5,048	4,135	4,341	5,349

*Estimate.

Expect Improved Demand in July

Prospects at the beginning of July are that labor demand this month and next will be greater, rather than less, than that of a year ago. Several construction projects are getting started in July, while others are only partly staffed and will make renewed demands upon the labor supply. Tiber Dam has been operating on a curtailed basis, due to high water and wet weather, the airbase at Glasgow is just getting into line to begin employment, and the Billings and Great Falls construction programs have been delayed in reaching full steam. Building of another dam to generate electricity from Clark Fork water is planned near Noxon.

Aluminum Plant Nearly Finished

On the other hand the aluminum plant at Columbia Falls, which has had employment above the thousand mark during most of the past two years, is nearing completion and will release substantial crews this month and next. Operation of the plant will begin this month, using about 250 men at the start and increasing to about double that number by fall. Many of the hires for this crew have been made. Preference is given to residents of the area.

Full Crews in Timber Industry

Lumber and logging employment appears to have reached its maximum for the season, at a point slightly above that of a year ago. Some of the logging outfits were stymied by road and timber conditions until well into June. Occurrence of a work stoppage in the metal mining industry, now in uncertain status, will curtail some of the timber demand and reduce employment there.

Wage Differences at Mines

The entire labor market of the state is sure to be affected by such a work stoppage, if the metal mining industry wage difference is not bridged. Currently the metal mines are converting to a six day week, from five, as one means for overcoming a long-standing shortage of underground miners. Trade and service employment, as well as construction plans, in the mining areas, are marking time pending outcome of the negotiations. Should a stoppage occur it will extend beyond the ranks of miners and smelter workers and reduce employment in other fields.

Seasonal Gains in Food Industries

Increases in July and August employment are expected in the food processing industry, and in the picking and packing of the cherry crop in the Flathead lake area. Retail trade and the service industries are likewise subject to force increases during the next two or three months. Much of this supply is derived from the school registrants, who are already at hand.

More Highway Workers Employed

Construction work on 360 miles of state highway and 15 bridge or overpass projects in June employed 1,226 workers, supplemented by crews of 733 on maintenance and repair for a total of 1,959. This represented an increase of 100 over the previous month but was still more than 100 below the total for June, 1954. High point of state highway employment was 2,364 in June, 1952.

Many Contracts Yet to Start

Further increases this season are in prospect, with a backlog of contracts upon which work was not in progress in June. More than 225 miles of highway construc-

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Along the Hiring Line—Field Summary July 1

ANACONDA, Deer Lodge, Philipsburg—(66 jobseekers; 26 men, 40 women; 12 men and 16 women over 45) Labor demand was light in June. College students on summer vacation and older high school graduates were used as replacements in smelter. Threat of labor stoppage hovers over the industry at beginning of July. Thirty retail stores are virtually closed in wage impasse with clerks. High school building nearly completed.

BILLINGS, Columbus, Hardin, Hysham, Laurel, Red Lodge, Roundup—(706 jobseekers; 448 men, 258 women; 181 men and 45 women over 45) Labor supply greater than year ago. Heavy registration of applicants released from classrooms. Construction program still lags, some idle skills in the file. Trade and service hiring led the way during June. Four new buildings to start in July, prospects are that surplus labor will be absorbed during the month. Farm season late, demand will develop with haying.

BOZEMAN, Ennis, Three Forks, Trident—(228 jobseekers; 120 men, 108 women; 10 men and 12 women over 45) Student registration heavy, construction is delayed by continued wet weather. Normal labor demand expected to develop during July. One dormitory nearly complete, two others well advanced and fully staffed. High school and gymnasium buildings under way, local labor sufficient. Another high school building to start later in summer in Bozeman.

BUTTE, Virginia City, Whitehall—(508 jobseekers; 292 men, 216 women; 100 men and 60 women over 45) Applicants from classrooms swelled labor supply in June, a normal seasonal trend. Mines converting back to 48 hour week, attracts more applicants though effect not yet felt. Possibility of work stoppage in the mines over wage levels deters recruitment and stagnates other employment enterprises in area. Clerks and stores negotiating for new contract. Highway and general construction program moderate.

CUT BANK—(131 jobseekers; 87 men, 44 women; 19 men and 11 women over 45) Labor supply much above year ago, lateness of season and lag in construction activity are contributing causes. School improvement program costing $800,000 started late in June, will use 40 workers through summer. Oil field operations accelerating as summer approaches.

DILLON—(67 jobseekers; 36 men, 31 women; 8 men and 6 women over 45) Seasonal work resumed in June, especially in construction. Eight homes, a gas station, and office building using 30 men, new sewer lines nearly complete, with 15 in crew. Rural electric line of 75 miles to be constructed during summer.

LABOR MARKET REFLECTORS

Employment—	1955 June	1955 May	1954 June	June Ave. 1950-1954
Industrial Employment	159,600	154,100	160,300	157,200
New Job Applicants	3,717	2,656	3,734	3,371
Job Applicants, End of Month	5,274	5,565	5,403	4,464

	July 8 1955	June 10 1955	July 9 1954	Avg. 1st July Wk. 1950-1954
New and Renewal Claims	222	270	260	201
Unemployed Weeks Filed	1,468	2,559	1,709	1,322
Total Unemployment Claims	1,690	2,829	1,973	1,523

GLASGOW, Fort Peck, Malta, Opheim—(333 jobseekers; 264 men, 69 women; 62 men and 12 women over 45)—Active file doubled from year ago, in anticipation of airbase jobs. Work there to start in July, using 100 or more during month. Supply already at hand. Apartment house using 18 men is under way, 12 houses to start in July. Road job using 25 men, bridge at Nashua will need 25 in late July.

GLENDIVE, Circle, Wibaux—(87 jobseekers; 67 men, 20 women; 26 men and 8 women over 45) Construction hiring has been delayed by rains, will be heavier in July. Right of way difficulties have delayed start of the oil pipeline. Local labor reserve will probably be insufficient when the summer program gets rolling. Transient labor supply is about normal.

GREAT FALLS, Choteau, Fort Benton, Stanford—(541 jobseekers; 299 men, 242 women; 102 men and 39 women over 45) Labor supply is 200 short of a year ago. Heavy registration of workers released from classrooms was absorbed on railway work and in the smelters. Seasonal labor shortages begin to loom, with farm demand increasing with hay operations, and carpenters, electricians and painters already in short supply. Construction of airbase barracks, several road jobs, and a big commercial building in August are expected to drain local labor supply.

HAMILTON, Stevensville—(108 jobseekers; 74 men, 34 women, 32 men and 12 women over 45) Labor supply slightly above year ago, due to lateness of season. All logging and sawmill operations fully staffed, with one mill on double shift. More lodge pole pine is being used than in previous years. Cannery at Stevensville will not be operated this season, reducing work opportunity there. Construction program is active.

HAVRE, Chinook, Harlem—(53 jobseekers; 19 men, 34 women; 3 men and 4 women over 45) Labor supply is much below a year ago with the market about in balance. Railroad hiring has been more active than in 1954. Construction crews all filled, July demand will probably follow June levels except in agriculture, where haying will start early in the month. Transient supply moderate.

HELENA, Boulder, Garrison, Townsend, White Sulphur Springs—(364 jobseekers; 246 men, 118 women; 88 men and 20 women over 45) Most of the June demand was in trade and service as the tourist season opened. Construction hiring is on slow pace, two building jobs fully staffed and looking to completion this summer. Smelter hiring negligible during June and static while wage dispute prevails; 200 idle. Brickyards offer few openings through turnover. Despite surplus in most occupational groups shortages of stenographers and some special skills prevails.

KALISPELL, Columbia Falls, Eureka, Libby, Whitefish—(725 jobseekers; 414 men, 311 women; 111 men and 36 women over 45) Completion of building contracts on aluminum plant has idled about 400 workers, some absorbed in other seasonal industry. Plant operation beginning in July, will use about 250 men by mid-August and 400 or more in late fall. Only local workers being accepted. Logging and sawmill work has been slow in reaching peak employment level after seasonal layoffs.

LEWISTOWN, Harlowton, Ryegate, Winnett—(53 jobseekers; 25 men, 28 women; 9 men and 10 women over 45) Construction hiring has been active but will be mostly for turnover rest of season. Building 15 homes, a super market, service station, telephone building, street paving and

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State Labor Supply Is Replenished

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tion and bridges to cost $273,000 are included in the backlog. Other contracts to be awarded in the near future may further augment the total highway employment. Included in upcoming contracts is one for a toll bridge over the Missouri in central Montana. Four small road jobs and seven bridge contracts were completed during June.

EIGHT YEARS OF MONTANA INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT TOTALS, BY MONTHS (in Thousands)

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Aver.
1948	134.4	132.0	133.2	137.1	140.6	145.8	148.9	150.3	151.4	149.6	149.4	147.7	143.4
1949	137.1	135.5	137.7	144.0	147.3	151.0	150.0	150.1	149.8	148.2	146.1	143.3	145.0
1950	133.2	132.2	135.2	142.1	147.3	153.6	154.9	157.1	156.8	152.2	150.7	148.8	147.0
1951	141.9	139.4	140.3	145.9	149.4	154.1	153.5	154.6	154.3	152.4	151.7	150.6	149.0
1952	140.5	140.7	143.0	149.7	154.8	159.9	159.5	161.2	160.4	157.9	156.0	154.9	153.2
1953	145.8	144.5	146.3	149.7	153.1	158.0	158.5	160.6	160.3	159.6	157.6	156.4	154.2
1954	146.6	145.4	147.1	150.7	155.1	160.3	161.3	161.4	152.3	150.2	152.3	150.6	152.8
1955	143.6	143.2	144.2	148.3	154.1	159.6							

Along the Hiring Line—Field Summary July 1

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road job. Bridge to be contracted on Missouri later in summer.

LIVINGSTON, Big Timber—(154 jobseekers; 103 men, 51 women; 41 men and 12 women over 45) Contractors on two road jobs, a lodge hall, bus station, and repair of roads in park have cut into the labor supply. Logging has resumed at full speed and all mills are staffed. Railroad employment below former years, no hiring at roundhouse or shops, few on extra gangs.

MILES CITY, Baker, Broadus, Ekalaka, Colstrip, Forsyth, Terry—(79 jobseekers; 47 men, 32 women; 15 men and 9 women over 45) Construction at low ebb and hiring almost negligible. No big building jobs in prospect. Most construction skills have migrated to other fields for the summer. Labor demand comes mostly from trade and service.

MISSOULA, Drummond, Arlee, Superior—(440 jobseekers; 278 men, 162 women; 84 men and 41 women over 45) Outside work hampered by adverse weather, full crews not yet on the job. Lumber and construction should develop greater demand during July. Mechanics are still idle because of labor dispute. Teamsters settled their differences but volume of employment is down because of reduced movement of goods.

POLSON—(268 jobseekers; 129 men, 139 women; 21 men and 11 women over 45) Registration of school youths and prospective cherry pickers and packers kept labor supply at May level, though logging, lumbering, and plywood crews are at full strength. Less road construction than a year ago; building program light. Farm labor demand light.

SHELBY, Chester, Conrad, Tiber Dam—(122 jobseekers; 84 men, 38 women; 13 men and 1 woman over 45) Construction crew on Tiber Dam down to 180, will expand in July, probably to 400 or 500. Labor market kept out of balance as workers await job openings there. Building program is at minimum, though a dozen residences are under way in the area. One service station contracted for July and a street paving job will be started then.

SIDNEY—(81 jobseekers; 52 men, 29 women; 12 men and 2 women over 45) Student registrants in June were absorbed by summer jobs in trade and on farms. Construction labor demand reduced with completion of church building. A business block and service station starting. Service and retail trade hiring fairly brisk in June.

THOMPSON FALLS, Hot Springs—(105 jobseekers; 96 men, 9 women; 30 men and 2 women over 45) Lumbering and logging about at its seasonal peak and fully staffed for the season. Construction program light, confined to small projects aside from the building of a dam by Washington Power company at Noxon Rapids, which is scheduled to begin soon.

WOLF POINT, Plentywood, Scobey—(55 jobseekers; 34 men, 21 women; 9 men and 3 women over 45) Less hiring in construction than in 1954; in-migration has been heavier, much of it heading to Glasgow for the airbase job. Work was in progress in June on service station, mortuary, grain elevator and annex, and several residences. Street paving and a road job are expected to start in July.

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA (1)

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)

INDUSTRY	EMPLOYMENT			Net Change	
	June 1955 (2)	May 1955 (3)	June 1954	May '55 to June '55	June '54 to June '55
NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES	159,600	154,100	160,300	5,500	— 700
Manufacturing	19,700	18,400	19,400	1,300	300
Durable goods	11,900	11,000	11,600	900	300
Lumber and timber products	6,700	5,800	6,600	900	100
Primary metals	3,900	3,900	3,800	0	100
Other (4)	1,300	1,300	1,200	0	100
Nondurable goods	7,800	7,400	7,800	400	0
Food and kindred products	3,800	3,400	3,900	400	— 100
Printing and publishing	1,700	1,600	1,600	100	100
Petroleum refining	1,300	1,400	1,200	— 100	100
Other (5)	1,000	1,000	1,100	0	— 100
Mining	11,000	11,100	11,300	— 100	— 300
Metal mining	7,600	7,900	8,100	— 300	— 500
Coal, quarrying and nonmetallic	800	700	800	100	0
Petroleum-natural gas production	2,600	2,500	2,400	100	200
Contract Construction	10,800	10,100	11,500	700	— 700
Contractors, building construction	4,200	3,700	4,300	500	— 100
Contractors, other than building	3,400	3,200	4,000	200	— 600
Contractors, special trade	3,200	3,200	3,200	0	0
Transportation and utilities	22,100	21,800	22,800	300	— 700
Interstate railroads	13,200	13,000	13,600	200	— 400
Transportation except railroads	3,400	3,400	3,700	0	— 300
Utilities including communication	5,500	5,400	5,500	100	0
Trade	40,200	39,400	40,100	800	100
Wholesale trade	9,000	8,800	8,700	200	300
Retail trade	31,200	30,600	31,400	600	— 200
General merchandise and apparel	5,400	5,400	6,100	0	— 700
Food stores	4,800	4,700	4,400	100	400
Eating and drinking establishments	8,400	8,000	8,300	400	100
Automotive and filling stations	6,100	6,200	6,000	— 100	100
Retail trade not elsewhere classified	6,500	6,300	6,600	200	— 100
Finance, insurance and real estate	5,600	5,400	5,100	200	500
Services and miscellaneous	20,600	19,800	20,900	800	— 300
Hotels, rooming houses, camps, etc.	3,700	2,900	3,900	800	— 200
Personal services	2,300	2,200	2,300	100	0
Other (6)	14,600	14,700	14,700	— 100	— 100
Government	29,600	28,100	29,200	1,500	400
Federal	7,400	6,300	7,600	1,100	— 200
State and local	22,200	21,800	21,600	400	600
Great Falls Area (Cascade County)	18,800	18,300	18,300	500	500
Manufacturing	2,900	2,900	2,800	0	100
Contract construction	1,700	1,500	1,600	200	100
Transportation and utilities	2,600	2,500	2,600	100	0
Trade, wholesale and retail	5,800	5,700	5,700	100	100
Services and miscellaneous (7)	3,500	3,500	3,400	0	100
Government	2,300	2,200	2,200	100	100

(1) Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members, personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.

(2) Preliminary estimates based on return from sample of 625 selected Montana establishments.

(3) Figures previously released have been revised on returns from 1,028 such establishments.

(4) Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.

(5) Includes apparel, chemicals, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.

(6) Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and professional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.

(7) Same as (6) above, also includes finance, insurance, real estate and mining.

COMPARISON OF BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS IN JUNE, 1955, AND JUNE, 1954

Employment Service Office	New Job Applicants				Jobseekers in File				Job Placements								U. I. Claims Wk. 7-8	
	June 1955		June 1954		June 1955		June 1954		June 1955				June 1954					
	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Ind.	Ag.	Tot.	Vet.	Ind.	Ag.	Tot.	Vet.	1955	1954
Anaconda	32	4	59	11	66	8	142	18	31	13	44	13	69	10	79	34	* 40	79
Billings	675	132	444	112	706	197	672	153	380	1,466	1,846	186	287	2,125	2,412	166	292	366
Bozeman	204	49	204	43	228	52	195	40	216	104	320	90	237	130	367	134	17	24
Butte	302	78	301	26	508	105	572	58	241	11	252	169	83	6	89	26	199	333
Cut Bank	84	24	51	18	131	41	27	5	39	54	93	27	75	17	92	45	57	15
Dillon	81	39	129	53	67	19	45	11	29	72	101	55	38	118	156	67	13	25
Glasgow	146	39	169	51	333	98	161	30	159	130	289	88	151	66	217	72	32	22
Glendive	54	22	61	24	87	25	41	8	86	145	231	59	224	249	473	128	23	19
Great Falls	501	143	536	123	541	135	768	194	377	326	703	285	380	401	781	256	247	286
Hamilton	32	5	60	14	108	26	91	17	59	425	484	20	30	617	647	15	33	33
Havre	116	29	175	48	53	6	90	18	209	82	291	146	159	145	304	130	19	17
Helena	182	32	222	67	364	114	282	69	138	67	205	75	221	55	276	134	78	56
Kalispell	495	91	481	75	725	162	1,018	140	138	18	156	55	189	6	195	82	201	226
Lewistown	49	9	76	16	53	7	86	19	37	72	109	50	58	57	115	53	35	28
Livingston	69	16	106	31	154	44	148	42	69	65	134	38	79	71	150	55	33	36
Miles City	59	17	112	28	79	21	169	46	79	292	371	146	174	256	430	172	40	53
Missoula	217	56	227	64	440	147	480	131	136	230	366	79	299	325	624	121	165	226
Polson	155	11	107	9	268	25	213	39	30	13	43	5	14	4	18	6	39	79
Shelby	93	28	86	14	122	22	76	11	61	81	142	64	143	35	178	62	26	18
Sidney	52	9	56	12	81	15	78	12	48	450	498	25	83	436	519	23	24	13
Thomp. Fls.**	67	15	—	—	105	37	—	—	27	3	30	15	—	—	—	—	55	—
Wolf Point	52	20	72	18	55	14	49	19	39	37	76	31	66	77	143	34	22	19
TOTALS	3,717	868	3,734	857	5,274	1,320	5,403	1,080	2,628	4,156	6,784	1,721	3,059	5,206	8,265	1,815	1,690	1,973

* Includes 33 claims of Federal Employees UC program instituted January 1, 1955. ** Office re-opened June 1.

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)
(Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel)

INDUSTRY	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	June (1) 1955	May (2) 1955	June 1954	June (1) 1955	May (2) 1955	June 1954	June (1) 1955	May (2) 1955	June 1954
All Manufacturing	$81.00	$82.23	$78.09	39.9	40.2	39.7	2.03	2.05	1.97
Durable goods	81.49	81.67	79.51	40.2	40.4	40.6	2.03	2.02	1.96
Primary metals	78.42	78.10	72.75	40.1	39.9	38.4	1.96	1.96	1.90
Nondurable goods	80.17	83.13	75.66	39.3	39.9	38.2	2.04	2.09	1.98
Food and kindred products	69.36	71.95	64.23	40.6	41.5	39.4	1.71	1.73	1.63
All Mining	83.66	84.08	80.71	38.4	38.6	37.6	2.18	2.18	2.15
Metal mining	79.67	79.56	77.93	37.8	37.7	37.2	2.11	2.11	2.10
Transportation and Utilities (except railrds.)	78.10	78.52	78.61						
Transportation (except railroads)	91.08	93.34	90.78						
Utilities and communication	71.74	71.20	72.80	38.8	38.6	41.6	1.85	1.84	1.75

(1) Preliminary estimates. (2) Figures previously released have been revised on more complete returns.

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